

## Parnell's Mission in Iowa

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## PARNELL'S MISSION IN IOWA

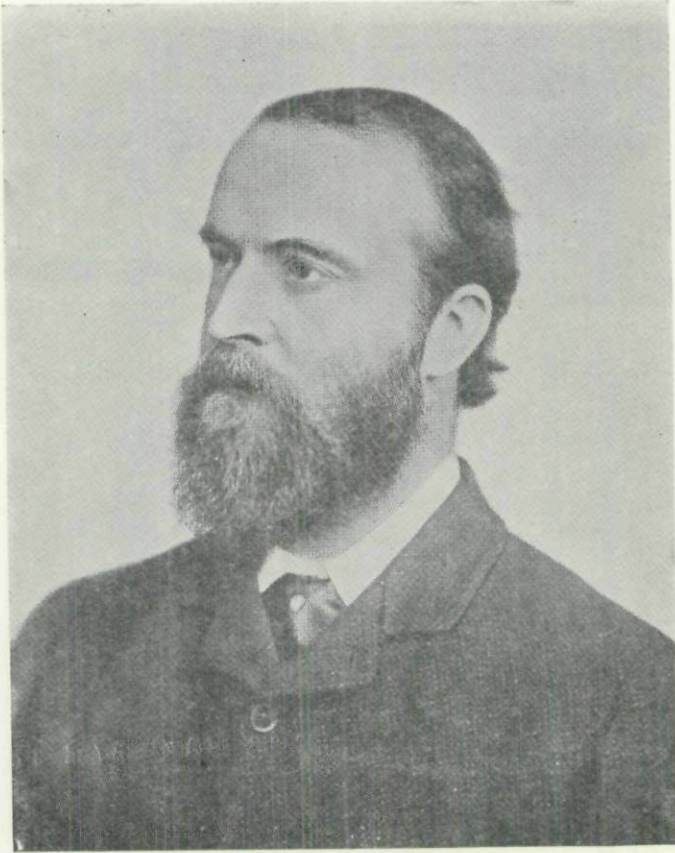
BY KENNETH E. COLTON

On the second of January, 1880, two youthful Irish leaders disembarked from the steamship *Scythia* in New York harbor, prepared to plead the cause of Ireland's land-impoorished peasants before the American public. Leader of the two was the tall, reserved, young landlord, just five years experienced in public affairs of Ireland and England, and just thirty-three years of age, Charles Stewart Parnell. Already the coming man in the Home Rule movement to repeal the Act of Union settlement of 1801, already a key figure in the contest between the "physical force" and "constitutional" parties for leadership in Irish agitation, Parnell was the paradox of English public life: a landlord fighting the landlords, a Protestant leading a predominately Catholic country, a cold, dispassionate chief guiding a fiery hot-tempered people.

Parnell and his companion, John Dillon, had been delegated by the Irish National Land League at its organizing session in Dublin, Ireland, October 21, 1879, to "proceed to America for the purpose of attaining assistance from our exiled countrymen and other sympathisers, for the objects for which this appeal is issued." This "Appeal to the Irish Race" had as its underlying principle "the complete distruction of Irish landlordism: first as a system . . . responsible for . . . poverty . . . Secondly, because landlordism was a British garrison . . ." To the reporters and the 300-man Committee of Welcome who met them on shipboard, Parnell declared the purpose of his American tour was the raising of funds necessary to support the land league program—the waging of an unremitting constitutional war against British protection of the absentee landlord. A new object to his visit, he added, had developed since the tour was originally planned; due to Ireland's third consecutive year of bad harvests he was now forced to also seek funds to avert a threatening Irish famine.<sup>2</sup> Although he may well have wished to make the political cause of the land

<sup>1</sup>Special Commission Act (to investigate Parnell), 1880; *Reprint of the Shorthand Notes of the Speeches, Proceedings, and Evidence taken before the Commissioners appointed under the Above-named Act*, (London, 1890), VI, 479; *Report*, p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>Dubuque Herald, Jan. 3, 1880; *Special Commission Reprint*, VI, 466, 599.



*Chas. S. Parnell*

league paramount, the scale of the famine and the temper of American sentiment made that impossible. Parnell even came to realize that to the American people the starvation in Ireland was his best weapon to attack the rack-rent citadel of Irish land tenure. It was in a dual role, therefore, that Parnell came to America, as a politician and as a charitarian.

Anticipated eagerly by all groups of American Irishmen, and hailed by the general press of the country, Parnell's visit was launched at a "keynote" meeting in Madison Square



Garden, January 4, 1880. Five days later, arrangements were completed with Drexel, Morgan & Co., of New York and Philadelphia to act as treasurers of his American funds,<sup>3</sup> and Parnell and Dillon set off on an eight weeks' tour of the country to raise one fund for famine relief, and another to support the land league program. With no centralizing agency to coordinate their speaking engagements, and following the haphazard system of accepting invitations more or less in the order they were received, Parnell and Dillon traveled many needless miles with a waste of time, money, and energy. Such a system inevitably broke down under its own weight. Later his itinerary was arranged by others and handled more efficiently.<sup>4</sup>

By the last of February, Parnell had already delivered his address in some forty American towns, had been received by Henry Ward Beecher and other dignitaries, lay and clerical alike, had been a guest in the Executive Mansion of West Virginia, had made his famous "twenty for lead and five for bread" remark at Troy, New York, and at Cincinnati, on February 20, had delivered the speech in which he was later to be accused of having seditiously urged that the "last link" between Ireland and the British Empire be broken.<sup>5</sup> Three days after the Cincinnati speech, on February 23, he was in Chicago for his several-times-postponed engagement, and there hailed by a wildly excited throng. Following their Chicago appearance, Parnell and Dillon, now accompanied by the Scotch editor, John Murdock, were scheduled to fill appointments in Milwaukee, Madison, St. Paul and Minneapolis, Dubuque, Clinton, Davenport, Des Moines, Peoria, Springfield (Ill.), and St. Louis before hurrying east to Toronto and Montreal.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup>*Dubuque Herald*, Jan. 10, February 6, 11, 18, 1880. By February 4, Drexel, Morgan & Co. had relinquished their agency as treasurers of the American fund, stating that it required too much extra help, and because "several other agencies for receiving and transmitting funds have been established." Parnell accused them of yielding to pressure from hostile London bankers. The successor to Drexel, Morgan & Co. was Riggs & Co. of Washington, D. C. They too relinquished the agency after a short while, claiming that Parnell was "actuated more by political ambition than by charity." He had trouble securing those whom he wanted to care for his funds almost from the beginning. A John V. Clarke, of Chicago, president of an Irish bank there, acted as treasurer for the northwest central states area, though most of the funds were forwarded outside such channels.

<sup>4</sup>*Special Commission Reprint*, VI, 14; Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland, or the Story of the Land League Revolution*, (New York, 1904), p. 207; *Dubuque Herald*, Jan. 23, 1880.

<sup>5</sup>*Special Commission Reprint*, VII, 330-333; XI, 125; X, 472-3; V, 154.

<sup>6</sup>*Iowa State Register*, February 10, 24, 1880; *Dubuque Herald*, February 24, 1880.

For weeks before, however, Iowa communities had been organizing to give public demonstration of their sympathy for the destitute of Ireland, and some had been in correspondence with Alexander Sullivan and John Forsythe, Parnell's tour managers in the northwest central states, seeking to boost their own efforts with the presence of either Parnell or Dillon.<sup>7</sup>

Among the first to take steps towards organizing a relief movement in Iowa, even before the landing of the two leaders in New York, were a number of Irish expatriates and other sympathizers in Des Moines. Several times the initial meeting of the Des Moines friends of Ireland had been postponed [in 1879,] but finally, one was held on New Year's eve, 1880, at which a temporary organization was effected and plans laid to raise funds for relief by staging the dramatic production, "Robert Emmet." On January 3, a permanent "Irish Relief Association" was organized, with regular meetings scheduled for every Thursday in the city council chambers. Twelve days later, the earlier discussions of securing Parnell to speak in Des Moines resulted in the appointment of N. S. McDonnell, John Hughes, and J. S. McCormick as a committee, empowered to visit Chicago at the time of Parnell's appearance there and to make every effort to secure him for Iowa's capitol city. On the 23rd of January, the Des Moines association determined upon the appointment of three teams of solicitors to systematically canvass the town for contributions towards an Irish fund, two teams for the four city wards, and another team for the East Side. P. M. Casady, as treasurer, was to keep a record of subscriptions and payments received. That more than just sympathy for the distressed Irish peasant animated the membership is proven by the explanation of the *Iowa State Register* that there were to be "two funds, the Land League and the suffering poor funds, so that those desiring to aid the poor or the agitation looking to the permanent relief can have their contributions sent to where they think they do the most good." All donations were to be published in the newspaper. As encouraging reports from the three teams began to come in by the end of the second week, Des Moines concentrated upon the fund and the hoped-for Parnell visit, and laid aside

<sup>7</sup>*Dubuque Herald*, Jan. 23, 1880.



the once-talked-of dramatic play, "Robert Emmet."<sup>8</sup>

As would be expected, Dubuque was not far behind Des Moines in turning her attention toward the distressed in Ireland, the home of so many of her citizens. The first meeting of Irish sympathizers was called for January 6; after several had relieved themselves of fiery speeches, the possibilities of Parnell visiting Dubuque were explored, and the meeting adjourned until January 10, when a larger attendance was hoped for. At the second meeting it was decided after considerable debate first to attempt to secure Parnell for a personal appearance, then, if that failed, to turn to a city-wide canvass. A committee was appointed to call on Parnell when he spoke in Chicago, where he was expected January 20, to invite him to Dubuque. The carefully chosen committee included W. J. Knight, Otto Junkerman, Maurice Brown, George W. Jones, (Sheriff) Peter Feering, M. M. Trumbull, David S. Wilson, John Deery, and Thomas Kavanaugh. The consensus that subscriptions "ten times as hearty and generous" would result from Parnell's appearance than could be gained by a city-wide solicitation suggests that the second meeting was also sparsely attended, and also that the leaders were hesitant to attempt a city canvass until a more general support was assured. Irish relief in Dubuque marked time for a number of weeks after this January 10 meeting, until definite announcements could be made by Parnell's western tour managers.<sup>9</sup>

While they could not so confidently hope for a visit from Dillon or Parnell, the cause of Ireland was not neglected by other Iowa towns. In Sioux City, interest in the plight of Ireland culminated on January 30 in an enthusiastic mass meeting held in the Academy of Music. Although the attendance was not large, over \$500 was raised that evening, and plans were set afoot to raise more. In the course of the next few weeks, additional sums were collected to boost Sioux City's net total contribution to \$1014. Despite no mention of Parnell's name in the newspaper reports of the meetings, his influence dominated the Sioux City leaders, for the money they raised was forwarded to Patrick Eagan in Ireland, treas-

<sup>8</sup>*Iowa State Register*, January 3, 4, 18, 25, 1880.

<sup>9</sup>*Dubuque Herald*, January 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, February 10, 17, 1880.

urer of the Irish Land League relief fund, the fund which Parnell sponsored in America.<sup>10</sup> Other towns did their bit too. Cedar Rapids, with only a faint hope of securing either Parnell or Dillon, went ahead to discuss the relative merits of a dramatic production, appointing canvassers, and other means. On February 24, at an organization meeting which had John Murphy, mayor of Davenport as its guest speaker, the appointment of twelve canvassers was decided upon in preference to the temperance play, the "Golden Crown," which had been first recommended by the editor of the *Cedar Rapids Standard*. In two weeks' time \$1000 was collected, with the final total above \$1100.<sup>11</sup> Council Bluffs reported by the middle of February the creditable sum of \$700,<sup>12</sup> while Charles City reported "nearly" \$200 had been raised in that small town by the end of the month.<sup>13</sup> Early in March a meeting of Irish sympathizers was held in Onawa,<sup>14</sup> and undoubtedly the story might be continued with other towns in Iowa, though, as in the case of Onawa, the totals realized are not known.

Besides these drives conducted by representative civic groups, special organizations also turned to aid the stricken areas in Ireland. Prominent among these were naturally those attached to the Catholic church. In Dubuque, members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society were asked on February 6 by the president and secretary of their national society to solicit funds for Ireland. Another organization, the Catholic Benevolent Society, was also collecting funds by the first week in February. On the tenth of the month Bishop Hennessy of Dubuque issued a church letter to the priests in his diocese to be read in all pulpits the following Sunday, urging that a special collection for Irish relief be taken. Although described as "the first public opportunity as yet afforded . . . our citizens to contribute toward the relief of Erin's faminished people," it was not strictly a city-wide public appeal. The response from the three Catholic churches in

<sup>10</sup>*Sioux City Tribune*, February 5, 19, 1880; *Iowa State Register*, January 31, 1880.

<sup>11</sup>*Cedar Rapids Standard*, February 12, 19, 24, 26, March 4, 18, 1880; *Dubuque Herald*, February 15, 25, 26, March 5, 9, 17, 1880.

<sup>12</sup>*Cedar Rapids Standard*, February 19, 1880.

<sup>13</sup>*Dubuque Herald*, February 26, 1880.

<sup>14</sup>*Cedar Rapids Standard*, March 11, 1880.



Dubuque was generous, however, a sum of \$2350 being raised, and from a West Dubuque church, which may have been a Protestant one, an additional \$129 was collected. These sums, added to the \$631 the St. Vincent de Paul Society shortly afterwards collected and forwarded, placed the Dubuque total from privately organized groups well over \$3000.<sup>15</sup> It should be noted also, that of the \$1100 raised in Cedar Rapids, \$300 was contributed by the Catholic church in that community.

In Davenport, "at the request of the promoters of the 'Irish Relief Fund,' of which the Lord Mayor of Dublin is Chairman," Bishop William Stevens Perry of the Episcopalian church issued a diocesan letter on February 17, calling upon his clergymen to assist in taking a special collection for the relief of Ireland. The monies when collected were to be sent to J. Howard Henry of Davenport, who in turn was to forward them to the Episcopalian Archbishop of Dublin. This collection, it will be noted, went to swell the Dublin Mansion House Fund, so much opposed by Parnell. The results of this Episcopalian call are not known.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to these organized collections for Irish relief, many private subscriptions found their way across the ocean to the blighted areas and hungry people.

In reality, therefore, Parnell's visit capped these earlier efforts and brought to a climax long weeks and months of earnest work on the part of philanthropic and deeply concerned citizens. In all three of the Iowa towns in which he made major appearances, Dubuque, Davenport, and Des Moines, elaborate preparations were made to ensure the success of his visit. Various committees were appointed, committees of welcome, of decoration, ticket selling, and, usually, solicitation as well. In each of the three towns, parades were planned to escort him from the railway station to his hotel quarters, with a torchlight parade later in the evening to light him to the opera house where he was to speak.<sup>18</sup> As a source of revenue to augment that already collected, admissions

<sup>15</sup>*Dubuque Herald*, Feb. 6, 8, 10, 11, 15, 1880.

<sup>16</sup>*Cedar Rapids Standard*, March 18, 1880.

<sup>17</sup>*Davenport Gazette*, Feb. 18, 1880.

<sup>18</sup>*Dubuque Herald*, Feb. 19, 20, 27, 1880; *Davenport Gazette*, Feb. 28, March 1, 1880; *Iowa State Register*, Feb. 22, 27, 29, 1880.



were charged for the evening meeting, the price being \$1.00 in Dubuque, and from \$.50 to \$1.00 in Davenport and Des Moines. In each town a special collection was also invariably taken at the close of the meeting, taking advantage of the generosity and sympathy for Ireland aroused by the personal pleadings of Parnell and Dillon.

It was a tired and weary Parnell who arrived in Dubuque from St. Paul on February 27. And no wonder. During their two months' tour of the country the Irish party of Parnell and Dillon seldom slept two nights in the same town, gained most of their rest in snatches on trains and pullmans, were subjected to fresh ordeals of official welcoming speeches, parades, and receptions daily, were under the constant strain of endeavoring not to disappoint local audiences and leaders, who expected them to be as fresh and strong, as stimulating and informing, as if they had just stepped from the steamship *Scythia*. Add to this the fact that Parnell was not engaged in a task congenial to his tastes or of his own choosing, and one may understand the newspaper comments that the Irish leader was showing the strain of his mission.<sup>19</sup>

On leaving St. Paul, the Parnell train enroute to Dubuque was met at practically every station by crowds eager to cheer the sight of this man who was leading Ireland's struggle against English rule. One enthusiast at McGregor hired a band to offer music during the brief pause the train made at that station.<sup>20</sup> Parnell's arrival in Dubuque was announced with the customary salvo of cannon shot, the usual welcoming speeches and official greetings, a band, and marching fraternal and religious organizations, to escort him to his headquarters at the Julien House.

Parnell's address that night in the opera house was practically identical with those offered the fifty to sixty other towns on his tour.<sup>21</sup> Following John Dillon's comparatively short remarks, Parnell began his speech by asserting that the

<sup>19</sup>*Dubuque Herald*, Feb. 28, 1880.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, Feb. 26, 28, 1880.

<sup>21</sup>*Special Commission Reprints*, X, 504. On Jan. 14, the report of his address at Fall River, Mass., for instance, was that it "was the speech substantially heretofore delivered." Parnell himself said of his sixty-two American speeches, "I think the Cincinnati speech and all the other speeches were fairly similar in character; in fact, I was accused by the 'New York Herald' of going round America on the same speech." See *Special Commission*, VII, 112.

fertility of Irish soil was such that it could easily support a population twice that which now sought to gain a livelihood off its rack-rented lands. He bitterly complained that it was the landlord system which permitted the Irish peasant to practically starve in the sight of plenty, for, he was careful to explain, this was not a famine of food, but a famine of money with which to buy food. Every day, he told his audience, loaded ships sailed east across the Irish Sea taking to English markets foodstuffs which the impoverished peasant, though starving, could not afford to buy. The cause for this condition he identified as the system of absentee landlordism, and proceeded to launch into a spirited attack upon that institution. The remainder of his address was devoted largely to a criticism of the other three relief fund agencies. Convinced as he was of the political and economic nature of the disaster, he accused the other agencies, particularly the Dublin Mansion House and the Duchess of Marlborough funds, of ignoring the basic cause of the recurrent famine—the land system—and urged that these agencies be boycotted by American contributors for the further reason that they forced the oppressed to accept relief at the hands of their oppressors, the landlords who dominated the two European relief committees. The Dublin *Freeman's Journal* was another object of sharp attack, apparently in the belief that the editor, Edmund Gray, was criticizing his mission for purely personal reasons. The address closed, as did all his Iowa speeches, with an appeal to his audience to aid the depressed peasantry in Ireland now, at a time when they most needed it, before the new crops could be harvested.<sup>22</sup>

The special collection which followed Parnell's address garnered a total of \$181.55. This with the disappointing \$400 taken in door admissions, together with later individual donations, made a total of over \$700.<sup>23</sup> Although \$700 may have seemed small, this in conjunction with the \$3000 already raised in the city made a total of which Dubuque could well be proud, though still short of the \$5000 the *Dubuque Herald* thought possible from Dubuque and Dubuque County.<sup>24</sup> In

<sup>22</sup>*Dubuque Herald*, Feb. 28, 1880.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, March 2, 1880.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, Feb. 7, 1880.



carrying out Parnell's suggestion made that evening, the mayor named solicitors the following day for each of the five city wards, apparently for the purpose of a city-wide canvass. Just how much was received from this source is not known, as no record was reported in the press.<sup>25</sup>

At the conclusion of the program in the opera house, Parnell and his party were taken to Clinton by a committee from that town present for that purpose. Dillon was scheduled to deliver the principal speech there, while Parnell was to continue to Davenport, where preparations were in order for a mammoth meeting the next night, February 28.

Parnell probably yielded to the importunities of Clinton leaders for a personal appearance and a few short remarks, for his arrival in Davenport was some four or five hours later than expected. By securing a special train and by making other arrangements, the resourceful welcoming committee succeeded in bringing their distinguished guests across the Mississippi on a ferryboat at dusk. Bad weather which settled into a drizzling rain as the day wore on considerably reduced the attendance expected, although a number of visitors came from Le Claire on the steamboat *Viola*, and more arrived by train from Iowa City, Wilton Junction, Maquoketa, and elsewhere. Parnell's speech that evening was almost identical to the one delivered in Dubuque. Since the late evening train in leaving before Parnell had taken his special hall collection, took away a hundred or more people, the otherwise small collection of \$100 is not to be wondered at; only eight subscriptions were above three dollars. There is no record of the door admissions taken, nor of any organized city-wide solicitation of funds before Parnell's arrival or after, consequently, no total for Davenport's contribution toward Irish relief or the political agitation of the land league can be given.<sup>26</sup>

Remaining in Davenport over Sunday, Parnell took advantage of the opportunity for relaxation offered by Reverend Nott, pastor of the Presbyterian church and his host while in the city, to rest quietly all day, attending the Presbyterian church in the morning and presiding at a rather select dinner

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, March 2, 1880, *et. seq.*

<sup>26</sup>*Davenport Gazette*, Feb. 27, 28, 29, March 1, 1880.



group of local leaders that noon. The next day he took the morning train to Des Moines in time to arrive for his Monday evening engagement there.<sup>27</sup>

In Des Moines, meanwhile, the Irish Relief Association tried to outdo itself in preparation for Parnell. On the scheduled program were a thirty-two gun salute, three different speeches of welcome, and the inevitable parades and reception. Moore's Opera House was elaborately decorated the evening before. Thus, with special rates obtained from the railroads serving the surrounding districts, the largest crowd in the memory of the city was confidently expected. To allay any fears the *Iowa State Register* reassured its readers that "if the Opera House will not hold all, another hall will be secured for Mr. Dillon, which will give everyone a chance to hear at least one of the distinguished gentlemen."<sup>28</sup>

Accompanied by Mayor Murphy of Davenport, a reporter for the *New York Herald*, the Des Moines delegation to Chicago, and the special Des Moines committee which met the train at Mitchellville, the Parnell party arrived in Des Moines to be welcomed by a salute from Captain Carey's battery, a parade, and a reception.<sup>29</sup> Previous to his evening address at the opera house, Judge C. C. Cole and Reverend Frisbie accompanied Parnell on an afternoon's visit to the state legislature then in session. Two days earlier both houses had adopted separate resolutions offering the freedom of the floor to the English member of Parliament. Although it was essentially a courteous gesture, it was an honor not hitherto granted an individual beyond the borders of the state.<sup>30</sup>

The evening program at the opera house was opened by M. H. King, president of the relief association, who was followed by Governor John Gear in a typical speech of welcome to the foreign guests. First of these to speak, Parnell's address was similar in phase, thought, and illustration to those given in Dubuque and Davenport. As in those two cities, his speech was punctuated with hisses at the mention of the *New York Herald*, and interrupted by applause at appropriate places

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, Feb. 28, March 1, 1880.

<sup>28</sup>*Iowa State Register*, Feb. 26, 1880.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, Feb. 22, March 2, 1880.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, March 2, 1880.

in his attacks on the landlord system of Ireland. John Dillon spoke briefly—it was not necessary to hire another hall—but the laurels of the evening were won by the Scotsman, John Murdock, who, dressed in his Scottish Kilts, proved a hit with his fund of burry humor. Following these addresses, brief speeches were made by General Josiah Given, Reverend Brazil, and Reverend Frisbie among others, as the partisan audience called for additional eulogies of Ireland and further criticisms of England.<sup>31</sup> Financially the meeting was a success. Together with the door admissions, the special hall collection pushed the total over \$1100, a sum which apparently did not include a \$200 collection from Stuart and Guthrie Center, tendered by Rev. Foley. Including previous collections received by the Irish Relief Association and already forwarded, part to the Catholic church in Ireland, and part to Parnell's Land League relief fund, Des Moines gathered a total in excess of \$3000 for Irish relief and political agitation both.<sup>32</sup>

For over a week following the appearance of the Irish mission in Des Moines, John Murdock remained in the city, apparently to consult and advise with parties interested in aiding and studying the cause of Ireland's distress. On March 9 he delivered a free lecture in Lewis' East Side Opera House on "The Cause and Cure of Irish Famine and of English and Scotch Pauperism," a lecture to which women were especially invited. John Dillon, who had been earlier advertised as available to nearby communities for several days following his Des Moines appearance, apparently was forced by Disraeli's threatened dissolution of Parliament to accompany Parnell on his return to Ireland.<sup>33</sup>

Turning back toward the east after his Des Moines engagement, Parnell and his party made stops in Peoria, Springfield, and St. Louis as previously planned, and in Toronto and Montreal as well, before sailing home to Ireland on March 13. Before sailing from New York, however, Parnell hurriedly summoned a group of leading Irishmen to a conference in that city to consider methods of a more permanent organization of the friends of Ireland in America. The result

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, Feb. 29, March 4, 7, 1880.

of these discussions was the formation of the American Land League in May, 1880.<sup>34</sup>

The object of Parnell's mission in America was to focus attention on the needs of Ireland, and in this he was successful. To the relief of Ireland all classes and creeds united: Jewish synagogues in New York, Catholic, and Protestant churches throughout the country joined in taking special collections; actors, actresses, and theatre managers offered benefit performances; merchants and shippers sent food and other articles to the distressed regions.<sup>35</sup> And the mission was not unsuccessful in raising funds either. Of all the subscriptions raised in this country, the Irish Land League received approximately \$250,000 for relief, and an additional \$100,000 for its political agitation. This represented probably half the total sum collected in America.<sup>36</sup>

With respect to securing support for the Land League program itself, however, Parnell was at first less successful. This was due in part to the poor impression he made on the platform and in personal appearances, and the exaggerated expectations held of the man by most Americans. The *Iowa State Register* reported on January 24, 1880:

Mr. Parnell is not meeting with the cordial encouragement in this country expected by the sympathizers of the Irish movement, and it is attributable chiefly, not to his cause, but to himself. In Boston he was described as being cold as an iceberg, with a thin voice, an awkward manner, no animation, no style, delivering a speech committed to memory that does not even warm him in its delivery, and failing to get at the hearts of his audience.

This undoubtedly was bitterly disappointing to those who from a man who could force an English Parliament to heed Ireland's demands had expected a fervid eloquence like that of an O'Connell, a Grattan, or a Burke. There can be little doubt that Parnell's poor public personality hurt his cause. But what contributed most to the opposition Parnell encountered in the midwest, and elsewhere too, was the paradox he presented of a man raising funds for relief criticizing others for engaging in the same humanitarian tasks. To many midwestern people this smacked of pure petty politics, entirely

<sup>34</sup>*Special Commission Reprint*, X, 502-03, *Report*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>35</sup>*Dubuque Herald*, Jan. 25, Feb. 18, 22, March 13, 1880; *Iowa State Register*, Jan. 24, Feb. 12, 13, 1880.

<sup>36</sup>*Special Commission Reprint*, X, 487; *Davenport Gazette*, March 1, 1880.



out of place in the awful crisis to be met. This attitude is reflected in several Iowa papers, notably in the *Iowa State Register* for February 11, 1880:

The recent abusive and fiery speeches of Mr. Parnell have tended to throw cold water on the Irish movement or at least in so far as his work therefor is concerned. He has abused other channels of relief, which, so far as the people of this country know, lead as directly to Ireland as the one conducted by him, and has mingled politics so freely with his charity as to disgust many people, and influence them to withhold their support and countenance in the movement of which he is made the special champion in this country. Mr. Parnell may be a very well meaning man, but he has made of his name an offense to many who have heard him.

That not many in this country understood his almost fanatical opposition to the landlords and English rule, which he considered the twin blights upon his country, is apparent in the *Register's* further comments a week later: "It is the great misfortune of these gentlemen that they have permitted themselves to exhibit their prejudices in this country, and to stoop to personal abuse and malignity, in the manner they have done." The *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, echoed in Iowa in an article reprinted in the *Sioux City Tribune*, even more angrily accused the Irish leaders of indulging in politics in their attacks on the relief agencies of England and Ireland, and charged the Irishmen with wasting the money they collected in expensive traveling accounts. The *Pioneer Press* concluded by urging "the charitably disposed people of America to stop listening to Mr. Parnell's stale sedition, and give ear to the cry of real distress that comes over the sea."<sup>37</sup> The *Sioux City Tribune's* lukewarmness toward the Parnell mission is further indicated in the exchange articles it printed carrying Lord Dunraven's reply to Parnell's criticism of the English landlord, and another carrying the heated denial of a Jonathan Pim of Parnell's allegation that the managers of the 1846-47 famine relief had mishandled the funds.<sup>38</sup> The Des Moines and Sioux City papers were not alone in their critical attitude. In Davenport the *Gazette* was noticeably silent about the progress of the tour, despite the presence of M. V. Gannon and John Murphy in that town. Even in Dubuque, a city with a large number of Irishmen in its pop-

<sup>37</sup>*Sioux City Tribune*, Feb. 12, 1880.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, Jan. 22, Feb. 19, 1880.

ulation, the *Dubuque Times* also was cool toward the Parnell and Dillon mission.<sup>39</sup> It should be noted that these papers were all generally friendly to the cause of Irish Relief. George D. Perkins of the *Sioux City Journal*, on the other hand, took a very prominent part in the Irish cause in that town.<sup>40</sup>

Even though most of his critics were at least benevolently disposed toward his cause finally, and might have agreed with the *Iowa State Register* that "those who have given their announced plans careful study can but acknowledge that they had not been judged by unprejudiced judges," the success of Parnell's mission in the United States was largely a triumph of the cause, and not a personal triumph.<sup>41</sup>

In the three Iowa towns he visited, the lead in organizing relief subscriptions was taken by those whose memories of the 1846-47 famine and abuses of the land system were still vivid. Some of these leaders very likely belonged to the more radical of the Irish patriotic orders, the United Brotherhood, or Clan-na-gael.<sup>42</sup> In Davenport, one of the active leaders, who helped to organize the out-of-town delegations to the Parnell meeting on February 28, was M. V. Gannon, later a member of the national council of the Clan-na-gael, and quite likely a member then. John Murphy, mayor of Davenport, probably was a member of the Brotherhood as well. Murphy was untiring and zealous in his advocacy of Ireland's cause, he delivered the main address at the organization meeting in Cedar Rapids, accompanied Parnell to Des Moines for the March 1 meeting, and delivered a few brief remarks towards the close of that meeting. Since the Clan was essentially a secret organization, it is impossible to state how many of those who participated in the various relief drives in Iowa towns were members of the Brotherhood, although some there undoubtedly were, especially in Des Moines and Dubuque where Irish sympathy manifested itself early and was marked by vigor.

The more permanent results of Parnell's visit to America lay not in the sums raised, but in the demonstrations of

<sup>39</sup>*Dubuque Herald*, Jan. 11, 12, 1880.

<sup>40</sup>*Sioux City Tribune*, Feb. 5, 1880.

<sup>41</sup>*Iowa State Register*, Feb. 29, 1880; Davitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 207, 210.

<sup>42</sup>Although he did not favor Clan-na-gael policies, Parnell told the Special Commission: "I believe that so far as any active interest was taken at the time of my going to America by Irishmen in the Irish question, it was by the men of revolutionary physical-force ideas." R. Barry O'Brien, *The Life of Charles Stewart Parnell, 1846-1891*, (1898), p. 213.

American sympathy for Ireland, and in the impetus given the organization of an American Land League by the conferences in Parnell's New York hotel room before he sailed for home. Several branches of this organization were later established in Iowa, and continued to offer sympathy and aid to the cause of Irish reform for years to come.



## LETTERS OF W. W. CHAPMAN

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The following are all the letters this department has in the hand of William Williams Chapman, the first Delegate in Congress from the Territory of Iowa.<sup>1</sup> Chapman served in the Twenty-fifth and Twenty-sixth Congresses, from September 10, 1838, to October 27, 1840, when his term expired. Although he undoubtedly made the attempt, he was unsuccessful in any effort to succeed himself, due largely to the combination of the powerful Dodge faction of father Henry and son Augustus Caesar Dodge with the supporters of George W. Jones, a combination which was sufficient to give the nomination to A. C. Dodge and to secure his election in 1840. Chapman's defeat and retirement from territorial politics was inevitable since he was without any large body of political supporters, for in addition to the followings of Dodge and Jones, Chapman had arrayed against him the supporters of Iowa's first governor, the stern and stubborn-willed Robert Lucas. The defection of the latter group is hinted at in the letters reproduced below. The bitterness of his defeat drove Chapman to flirt with the opposition Whig party in the succeeding years, and more than likely contributed to his decision to undertake the hazardous overland journey to Oregon in 1843.

Chapman's interesting Iowa career was somewhat typical of those realized by many another ambitious and capable young attorney when the middle western territories were opening up a hundred years ago. Serving as a district attorney in Michigan Territory, he later became United States District Attorney for the Territory of Wisconsin, prior to the creation of the Territory of Iowa. In addition to his active law practice Chapman engaged in farming, and for several weeks tried his hand at editing the *Dubuque Visitor* at Dubuque. At the time of his departure for Washington he was

<sup>1</sup>The letters reproduced here are from the original longhand copies in the possession of the State Department of History and Archives, and are to be found in the letter collections of those to whom they are addressed, except the two to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the Secretary of War, which are in the *Correspondence of Superintendents of Indian Affairs for the Territory of Iowa* in this department.

Two other letters in the hand of W. W. Chapman are to be found in the files of the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Michigan, and are printed by Benj. F. Shambaugh in his *Documentary Material Relating to the History of Iowa*, (1897-1901, 3 vols.), III, 279, 280.

in partnership with James W. Grimes, another youthful attorney who was later to be heard from, not only in Iowa, but in the nation at large. For a more complete sketch of Chapman's Iowa career, see *Annals of Iowa* Vol. XXI, pages 283-295.

Burlington Des Moine County Jany 21 1836

DSir

Permit me in the name of the people of this purchase to forward you a Petition for a Surveyor Generals Office. The short time which we had to procure signers is an excuse for not having more names but you can vouch for five or six hundred in this County as well as a great many in Debuque. There is Ten arguments in favor of having an office here to one in [~~Debuque is crossed out~~] Illinois which was expected. See for one moment the unbounded extent of Country west of us which requires immediate survey! You can't do too much in favour of this object. Illinois had strong hopes of an office because they only had some unfinished business while we have years of surveying. If you succede in getting this office and the title to our lots you may have the sufferages of the people here for any office. The improvement here in property & price is great indeed. A gentleman is waiting to carry this letter to a neighboring office compells me to close. I congratulate you on getting your set &c &c.

Your &c

G. W. Jones

W. W. Chapman

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Burlington Des Moine County M[ichigan] T[erritory]  
Jany 29, 1836

Honl. G. W. Jones

Dsir

Your letter of 14 Ult. is just reed. and before me. Let me congratulate you on receiving a seat in Congress. And while I must regret the loss of the Certificate of election I am proud that your vote so far exceeded that of your Opponent as to render the Certificate of our election unnecessary as it relates to the securing your seat in Congress.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>This refers to a certificate of the vote of Des Moines County in the election of a Delegate in Congress from Michigan Territory, held in the spring of 1835.

According to your request I have this day forwarded a Certificate of the election in this County. And it being some time before our regular mail will leave I have procured a private individual to Carry the letter Containing the Cert. to an Office from which it would leave more speedily.

Before this time you will have perhaps recd. my letter enclosing the petitions of the Citizens of Burlington for title to their lots. It is all important that the Bill for the relief of the petitioners should Correspond with the prayer of the petition. The reasons are obvious and to recite them would be intruding upon your good judgement. I have also enclosed to you a petition for a Surveyor Generals Office here which virtually includes a prayer for a survey of the Country. The people here are willing that the seat of Government shall be in your Country but on or near [the] river.<sup>3</sup>

Petitions are under way for post routs from Camp Des-Moine by Burlington to Debuque also from Macomb McDonough County Ills by Burlington Des M. Co. M. T. to Mount Pleasant in said last mentioned County. The last mentioned route should Certainly be a stage route Connected with a route from Rushville east. I am informed that a stage route is already established from Rushville to Macomb if not however then the route should be from Rushville by Macomb to Burlington, from Burlington to Mt. Pleasant by horse. It will cost Government little or nothing more to Carry the mail by stage fom Rushville to Burlington than on horse. I am also inclined to the Opinion that if the mail was carried from Palmyra [sic] Mo. by B[urlington] to Debuque by a town oposite Rock Id that the Cost to Government would little excede that of Carrying it on horseback and be a great accommodation indeed. A great part of the season the river is so low as to detain travellers and on other Considerable portion of the year the river is impassable on account of ice. The advantages to Government would amply pay her for so doing. 1st. It would raise the price and 2d Increase the demand for

<sup>3</sup>The bitter contest for the selection of the temporary and permanent location of the capitol of the Territory of Wisconsin began even before the latter was created, in April, 1836. Burlington and Dubuque were the leading contenders on the Iowa side, Burlington finally gaining the temporary capitol site. See *Annals of Iowa*, XXI.



her land, and besides [sic] many other advantages.

I must Close—more hereafter

Yours Respectfully

W. W. Chapman

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Burlington 17th March 1836

Hon Geo. W. Jones

House Reps

DSir

Permit me to acknowledge your frequent letters & papers and the great favour I esteem it to receive from you such marked attention. The people are much pleased at your course in the House. I hope you will continue your Correspondence only increase it. We have forwarded our Credentials which we hope [you] will in person lay before the President and write us his views and the probability of success.

You cannot scarcely imagine the importance of the passage of a law conforming to our petition relative to lots. As Many persons who have purchased in consequence of the want of lumber could not build & improve.

To establish stage & mail routes as mentioned in a former letter will be of great importance indeed as also to establish a Surveyor Generals Office. More next mail

Yours most

Respectfully

W. W. Chapman

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Steam Boat Debuque from Galena to  
Burlington April 7, 1836

Genl G. W. Jones

House Reps U S.

DSir

As Major Legate is by this Boate upon his way to Washington, I think proper again to interrupt you with the suggestion of the idea of a separation of the Territory west of the river from that East. I foresee much difficulty in locating

the seate of Government and that although the separation of us from the Territory east of the river would of course separate us from you and prevent us from manifesting our regard for you [sic] most valuable services yet confideing in your entire devotion to the welfare of your Constituents I can not for a moment doubt that if you should believe it proper that you would urge upon Congress the divission of the Territory. This under no Circumstances could be effected this session but you can ascertain the minds of prominent members of Congress upon that subject. I see that you are endeavoring to procure the passage of a law to secure us in the Title to our lots In doing this provide for farms adjoining Town. Col. Leffler and myself have forwarded our recommendations I am making my arrangements to move to the seate of Governmt this fall and take pleasure in the anticiipation of being neighbors.

Governor Horner will convene the Council at either Mineral Point or Dubuque on the 20 of May next. He has appointed me District Attorney in the room of Burnett.

I think if you should succeed in procuring the appointment that it will be to our mutual benefits. I have given the people all the public news you sent me and you may be assured that they are much pleased at your Course also attention to their rights etc.

Yours Respectfully  
W. W. Chapman

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House Reps Jany 15, 1839

Hon. T. H. Crawford  
Commissioner of Indian Affairs

Sir

The people of the Territory of Iowa have instructed me to inquire if any steps have been taken to purchase more lands from the Sac & Fox Indians.<sup>4</sup> It is important to the general Government in at least two points of view that a purchase of more lands from those Indians should be made immediately.

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<sup>4</sup>The first purchase from the Indians of Iowa lands formed a part of the treaty which ended the Black Hawk War, September 21, 1832. The second purchase was made in 1837, and added an additional 1,250,000 acres to the original purchase. Agitation was almost immediately begun for even more land acquisitions by the government, culminating in the treaty of October 11, 1842.

1st By the late Treaty with those Indians their agent was to select lands for their farms and a sum of money was set a part for that purpose of improvements. Now when those improvements are Come [?] Complicated it will add one half to their demand for Cession and particularly in this instance when the Selection was made adjacent to our White Settlements. The improvements proposed to be made so Close to the White people in my Opinion m[a]y be the Cause of ill Consequences.

2nd In an other view of the subject I think it would not now be so difficult to procure their removal as when their improvements shall be Completed. They will become endeared to their homes by their farms, houses, mills and other improvements. It surely cannot be the policy of the Government to make their present selection a permanent home. If such is the policy I cannot imagine any thing which will be in the end be productive of Consequence more injurious to our peo[p]le. I have no reason for supposing that any such policy has been determined on.

We have a population of near forty thousand upon what is called the "Black Hawk Purchase" increasing rapidly. If any action by Congress is necessary I should be glad to be informed.

Very Respectfully  
W. W. Chapman  
of Iowa

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Washington January 27 1839

Hon L. Summers  
Sir

I have recd the petition for a post office at Elizabeth City and in person laid it before the Department. I enclose you his answer showing that the usual steps are taken preparatory to establishing the Office.

I have nothing new to write about. The graduation Bill



*Sleeps* Calhoun fights for a Cession of the land to the states which I think will take place next session.<sup>5</sup>

Yours Respectfully

W. W. Chapman

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Washington Nov 29th 1839

Hon: J R Poinsett,  
Secretary of War<sup>6</sup>

Sir

For four or five years past I have noticed the proceedings of the Indians Agent for the Sacs and Fox Indians and I am well convinced the Fur Company must have an undue influence over the agent. I am personally friendly to Genl. Street but I have a duty to perform which personal friendship should not Controul.

When the Indians were paid in 1838 it would seem from the Report of Genl. Street that he was annoyed by the white people. This may be true but what was the Cause of it? It was occasioned by the agent paying the fur Company without even investigating their accounts & scrutinising those of Individuals almost to a total exclusion.

This year the Indians were paid in paper Money and Bills of \$20. \$50. \$100 piled up, the \$10 pile of \$20. Bills were as large as the \$100. Bill pile and the Indian selected according to size which much deceived him.

In an other instance the agent suffered the Indians to make an arrangement with the Fur Company by which the Company agreed to receive *all* the money except a small amount, and also agreed to pay all debts of less amts than \$1000. each divide the ballance amongst the larger Claimants. and afterwards the Company kept the money.

<sup>5</sup>All through the 1830's there was a bitter fight in Congress between the Whigs and the Democrats over the disposition of the federal lands unsold and especially over the proceeds from the sale of these lands. The Whigs favored a distribution of the proceeds on a ratio favoring the older states, while the Democrats favored first a cession of the public land to those states within whose boundaries it lay, later a modification of the distribution system. Calhoun, a Democrat, favored cession, but fought a losing battle; the Whig distribution plan became a law in 1841, proving Chapman a poor prophet.

<sup>6</sup>The Secretary of War was the superior of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, and in this letter Chapman is going right to the head. There is a suspicion that Chapman took this step for political purposes, at any rate, it back-fired, as both Gov. Lucas and Street vigorously denied the contentions contained in this letter. See *Correspondence of Superintendents of Indian Affairs for the Territory of Iowa*.

The Company are in the habit of furnishing goods to the influential Indians individually and Charging it to the Nation. Thus some get all & Many almost nothing. When the account is presented it is against the nation. and under such arrangements the Man who gets only five dollars worth of goods pays as much of the account as him who received \$100 worth. In consequence of this course of Conduct Many *poor* Indians are thrown upon the white neighbour for provisions—he Cant refuse hom, yet if he sells him any thing, it is doubtful whether he gets any thing for it.

In 1838 An Individual had broke some 800 or 100 dollars worth of prairie for an Indian Keokuck I think, the account was presented the agent refused to pay unless on the payment of \$500. he would receipt in full, altho the Indians were present & requested payment to be made.

Many other of similar Character has occurred and I am satisfied that Genl. Street will not lend his aid to any Measure proposed by the Government which has not a tendency to promote the interest of the Fur Company—

I therefore respectfully solicit the removal of Genl. Street & the appointment of Doct (Doct. repeated) Gideon L. Bailey of Van Buren County I. T. now a prominent member of the assembly. Gov. Lucas will concur with me in the recommendation.

I have the honor sir to be your

Obt.

Servt

W. W. Chapman

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Washington December 10th 1839

Hon L Summers

Sir: Your favour of the 23 Nov last has just come to hand. The possibility of procuring the passage of such a law as the one you refer to concerning Certain Towns is some what doubtful. But you may rely upon it I will spare no pains to accomplish so desirable an object.

I learn this day that the Sheriff of Clark County Missouri is in custody and tho it maybe right I fear it may

predjudice our claims before Congress. The members from Missouri are busy [or very] obliging and propose to give us to Browns Line.<sup>7</sup> But Congress will sustain our just Claim. Write often

Yours  
Respectfully  
W. W. Chapman

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Washington 17—Dec 1839

Hon: J. M. Robertson  
Hon L Summers

Sir: Your favour of the 30 Nov is now before me I hope that Confidence you seem to repose in me is merited. it must result more from the embarrassments which a portion of the Government officers at Burlington throw in the way of doing so much as I otherwise might, than from what I have really done. Tho I must assure you that no exertion on my part has, or shall be wanting, to promote the interests of our Territory.

What shall be done this session depends more upon your ensureing the transmission of Memorials. You should be sure that they are forwarded, because as last winter there are persons who would rather that nothing be done than I should get the memorials. The probability is that my seat will not be contested, but if it should, it may delay & totally defeat many important measures.

R. M. T. Hunter (whig) elected Speaker on 11th Ballot-  
ing

Very respectfully  
Your obt Servt  
W. W. Chapman

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Washington Decr 25, 1839

Hon L Summers

Sir: This morning your favour bearing date 9 Dec Came to hand after being detained by the Snow storm some days. As yet no Memorials have Come to hand. Why I can-

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<sup>7</sup>The contention between Missouri and Iowa over the boundary line between them arose over the definition of what was meant by the term "Rapids DeMoines," whether in the Des Moines River, or in the Mississippi River. The people of the two territories came near to blows over the question which was finally settled only by the U. S. Supreme Court in 1851.



not tell but suppose probably that letters come sooner than heavy documents. Some resolution should be passed before adjournment providing that in the event of some Officer to be named being informed by me that the Memorials have not arrived That they remail them.

The Mail routs you refer to shall be attended to with every exertion in my power. Don't expect too much

I have nothing new except on yesterday the Message was received & I forwarded you a copy.

Yours in haste

W. W. Chapman

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House of Reps Jan'y 14. 1840

Hon: Charles Mason.

Sir: Since I wrote you, I have been fully convinced that especially where we are contending with a State having great weight in Congress that pacific Measures are the best. We are the weaker party, and therefore I advise that having induced Missouri to Suspend hostilities The sheriff should be released. All here expect under the Circumstances that he was released. I however understand that the Sheriff remains in custody and will probably produce a difficulty on that account. If hostilities are suspended I certainly think generosity and a Spirit of Conciliation require the release. The Committee will unanimously report favourable I suppose from understanding I think a Bill be reported making the Indian line as represented on the Sullivan Map the line. this is one east from the north west corner. The evidence is conclusive in our favour. I will send you the report soon as made & printed & the substance soon as reported.

Congress is interrupted at every step by abilation petitions. I am pleased that you declined issuing a writ against the Missourians for High Treason. Sir: such a grant might have involved us in irretreviable ruin as it respects peace and a just disposition of the boundary question. I am sorry that some men are so anxious to do all, that every thing done purely with a view of keeping peace is abused and dragged into personal altircation. Such was the course towards my-

self on account of interference to prevent the authorities of Missouri and Iowa from Coming in Contact. I care not for all this if yet we can succede [sic] in settling the question to advantage and without spilling blood.

I will write you again soon. In the mean time let me hear how old friend Lucas feels under a suspension of hostilities. I think he and one or two others would rather have war than peace. War under any Circumstances is Calamatous, and truly so under the present with neighbours and upon a subject we cannot settle tho we spill our choicest blood

Respectfully

Your obt Servt

W. W. Chapman

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House Reps Feby 21. 1840

Dear Sir

Your favour of the 2nd Ult has just Come to hand and its contents it gives me much pleasure to say to you that your Course in my estimation has been a proper one. I am not astonished that the old Govr. should have taken humbrage at your pacific interfrance. He must have hoped for a glorious Campign against Missouri and the result would have been that we should have lost the disputed ground.

I exceedingly regret that he ever found his way to our Territory. I never Could see the propriety of his limiting our appropriations to defray the expenses of the assembly. By the regulations of the Department the Secretary of the Treasury will not submit to the Committee of Ways & Means an estimate for any appropriation beyond the estimate of the Governor. Why an infant Territory should be bound down in its expenditures I cannot see. I am sure that we received double the usual amt of money that even then we should not get back our money drained from us for the public lands.

We are annually drained of every dollar that can be raised and under such Circumstances to see one of our own family curtailing and embarrassing our pecuniary concerns [?] is a source of very great regret. And you know that I have seldom thrown any difficulty in the way of the progress

of business in the Territory. Yet the most of our embarrassments have grown out of the muleish Conduct of this Man. I am individually willing to bear for so short a time with his infirmities.

The Bill for a state Government is ready to report at the earliest moment and will pass leaving it to the legislature to Call a Convention and that Convention determine whether a Convention will form [frame?] a Constitution.

Write often — give me the news

Respectfully

Your obt Sert

W. W. Chapman

Hon. C. Mason



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